Mockingbird Times

Recipient of 2005 Congressional Angels in Adoption Award
Building a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth.

August 2006

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak Out Across the Nation
Visit us online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org or call 206-323-KIDS (5437)

In This Issue

Letter from the Editor
Jim Theofils
Page 2

The Real Definition of Love
Raquel Granath
Page 2

Letter to the Editor
Tamara Sponger
Page 2

Aloha Dietrail!!!
Misty Lou Cook
Page 3

Happy Birthday to Mockingbird Society; celebrating five years this month!

Creative Corner: Drama-Free Life
Renita Baskin
Page 3

Rediscovering Myself and Family
Malouka Taylor
Page 4

Creative Corner: Tarek
Raquel Granath
Page 4

Life is Just So Hard at Times
Teresa Asher
Page 4

Mockingbird Staff take final farewell picture with Americorps member, Dreta Clayton.

Happy Birthday to Mockingbird Society; celebrating five years this month!

How to Get Yourself Off the Streets

The first and most important thing to establish early on is a desire to get yourself off of the streets. You have to really and truly want to stop the cycle of homelessness if you really don't want to stop being homeless, then you won't stop being homeless. I know that this can be complex, because of so many different life situations, but if you really, really want to get yourself off of the streets, then no one can stop you from doing just that.

After you've established and confirmed your desire to get yourself off of the streets, you have to learn to believe in yourself and your strengths. You were probably told that you were stupid, fat, ugly, lazy or some sort of other horrible adjective at some point in your life, or throughout your entire life. It's very important that you learn NOT to believe these insults. If someone has made assumptions about your intelligence, your morals, your personal goals, your dreams or your identity based upon false stereotypes and prejudices, then they were being racist, homophobic, sexist or just plain ignorant. Don't believe the lies. The truth is that you are beautiful, smart and capable, and they were probably just picking on you to make themselves temporarily feel better about their own situation (which never works out in the long run). In my experience, people, especially homeless youth, are more afraid of their strengths than their weaknesses, which have probably been pointed out and exaggerated, especially if they are a marginalized youth. You have to believe in yourself and your abilities!!! If you're still discovering what all of your skills, talents and dreams are, then that's okay too. Let yourself discover your dreams, talents and passions. Get to know yourself and be comfortable with yourself and in your personal and cultural identity. This is so important, it is the most crucial step...because if you don't believe in yourself, it doesn't matter if the resources and solution is RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOUR FACE and saying “hey!”, because you won’t be able to realize that you are smart, capable and able to take advantage of this opportunity to get yourself off of the streets. Surround yourself with positive, good and comforting people and create a supportive community for yourself. You will only benefit from believing in yourself.

There's only one thing left to do once you've established a desire to get yourself off of the streets, created a supportive community and finally started believing in the incredible being and survivor that is you: get yourself off of the streets using the resources that have presented themselves to you or that you have intentionally sought out. That's it. Recognize that there are good people who want to help you and connect with them. Be open to different options and don't sell yourself short, reach for the stars. After all, you ARE a star: beautiful, bright and shining, immersed in a gorgeous sky of endless possibilities. You can really do anything you want if you want it, believe in yourself and just go for it, reach for your goals. Don't be too hard on yourself if you fall in your process of reaching for the stars, because it's like what Frederick Douglass said: “Without struggle, there is no progress ...” Be persistent and creative with your solutions to homelessness. One of the keys to getting yourself off of the streets is being dedicated to your goals. You need to know who you are and what you want and then just GO FOR IT ... the last step is to take the foundation built up in the first two steps and utilize them for all their worth. The last step in personally ending your youth homelessness is to just get yourself off the streets. You can do it, you know that you can. Go ahead and BE the CHANGE you want to see in this society...
Mockingbird Society: The Story Behind the Name

The 1962 American classic To Kill A Mockingbird by Harper Lee is the inspiration for our name, Mockingbird Society. Atticus, the widowed father of Jem and Scout, joins Miss Maudie in teaching his kids that it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird because “…Mockingbirds don’t do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don’t do one thing but sing their hearts out for us.” What if we created an organization, a community, indeed a world in which our most vulnerable children and youth were protected and valued with the same commitment that Atticus had for mockingbirds? Join the Mockingbird Society today and help us give young people a safe place to nest and sing.

Mockingbird Times

Get Published, Get Paid!

We are looking for articles, poetry, artwork and photography from our young readers who have experience in the foster care system and/or homelessness. If you want to be published in the Times, contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org. For more info and to check us out; go to www.mockingbirdsociety.org.

Meet Our Staff

Executive Director Jim Theofelis
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Public Relations Darcia Gray
Executive Assistant Lauren Frederick
AmeriCorps Member Drea Clayton
Senior Youth Representatives Nicki Lou Cook, Dennis Fisher, Janice Henderson
Youth Representatives Larishica Asher, Teresa Asher, Surri Evans, Jessica Garcia, Raquel Granath, Renita Baskin, Samuel Martin, Zeb Willis
Contributing Writer Malecia Taylor, Tamsen Spengler
Volunteers Christin Jackson

The Real Definition of Love

I’ve been contemplating the purpose of humans on this earth for quite a period of time now and I think I’ve come to a conclusion on why we were put here. We were put here to Love… love conquers all things. If everybody loved each other there wouldn’t be war going on in Iraq or world hunger steadily increasing in Third World countries. If you LOVE, someone are you going to sit there and let them suffer? If you loved each and every person, would you let them die in front of you when you have to power to save their lives? I seriously doubt it. This world is not too far gone. We can save ourselves if we just show an ounce of love.

You will know you’re in love when it happens. Love will have its doubts but its how you overcome them and continue to love that defines the league of love that you’re in. Not everyone will experience all the different kinds of love in their life to be able to differentiate which one it is. Friendly love is obviously the kid shared between siblings and family, one that is not romantic but on a lesser value more affectionate. The religious, or “agape love” states that everybody should have unconditional love for all people which is true but sounds kind of unrealistic in this context. Then there’s our favorite, puppy love. The love that kids fall into and swear is real but is labeled as infatuation.

Lastly there’s the one that people strive to acquire sometimes for their whole lives. The big cheese, the cigar, the romantic, true, undying, committed love shared between two people (not necessarily of the opposite sex) This kind of love is few and far between and sometimes even hard to distinguish. It’s a beautiful enlightened place. And when I say ‘place’ I mean that literally; being in love is a whole different dimension. Its euphoria, things are very warped; your perception of the world around you may be hazy. It’s beyond getting high, or drunk, or any other device that man has constructed to escape reality because it IS reality. Everyday you wake you your life has a meaning and a purpose. And depending on how the dynamics of the relationship are, you think about that person more than you think about yourself. You treasure them and their feelings, you long for them, and hold their best interests at heart. On your list of necessities right between oxygen and food, their name is written in bold letters so you’re sure not to leave it out. This person is beyond infatuation, and beyond obsession, this person is part of the reason you’re living. This is love, the mere declaration of the word makes you think of your best friend, the person you can trust with your deepest secrets, the one who would never let you down. It’s beautiful.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Just want to let you know I am so impressed and moved by your Mockingbird Times newsletter. The stories the youth have written are so heart felt and well written it makes me wish I could give them a hug! Their articles and photographs show the inner happiness and positive personal growth this opportunity has provided them. Please let them know how much I look forward to reading the newsletter every month and for them to keep doing this wonderful work. And thank you for being there for them.

Tamsen Spengler
Program Manager, Rainier Beach Family Center

Thank You’s

A special thank you to those who helped make our event on July 27th a great success:

Regina Louise; Ocheam; Michael Savage; Chris Jackson; Tenley Ghan; Joan Stewart; Davidson Dodd; Erin Pugh; Elias Rothblatt; Marika and Luke Theofelis; Linn Tran; and the Garfield Community Center.

Matt & Maureen Marinovich; Steve and Kelly Nolan Shuler; Joy Smucker; Maria Oropeza; Sabrina Schongalla; Silvana Bruzel; Alan Rothblatt and Sima Kahn; Bill Dickerson at Olympus Press; Wendy Miller and Seattle REI; Virginia Blayney; Kathryn Brooks; Henry and Jennifer Gordon;

The Mockingbird Society: A Mockingbird Inside Your Mailbox

Make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable youth and support the Mockingbird Society! Donations may be tax deductible and all donors receive the Mockingbird Times. Enclosed, please find my check made payable to Mockingbird Society in the amount of: $

Suggested Donations:
$1,000+.... Protector $500-999.....Caretaker $250-500.....Organizations $50+.....Supporter $25.....Foster Parent

NAME
EMAIL
ADDRESS
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Please fill out and mail this form with a check or money order payable to: The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Ave South Suite 240, Seattle WA 98144, or donate online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org.
**ALOHA DIETRA !!!**

**Misty Lou Cook**

When Dietra first walked into the office here at the Mockingbird Society and Times, no one knew how much she would change our workplace, our communities, our lives with her humor, smile and helpful advice. Our AmeriCorps volunteer, Dietra Clayton, brought us all a lot closer together and it’s hard to put into words how much we’ve all appreciated her consistent, shining presence, with her bad knock knock jokes, spiritual tattoos and complex but lovable personal identity. Dietra, I speak on behalf of the rest of the Mockingbird when I say that we will ALL MISS YOU and your zany sense of humor, knack for helping out troubled youth and your fabulous fashion sensibilities!!! You have taught us all so much; from how to write poetry to how to bridge cultural gaps to how to be compassionate yet professional at work. We all know you, we all love you and we will ALL MISS YOU. Luckily for us, you’re still going to be an on-call volunteer here at the Mockingbird Times, since you are a chronic do-gooder and all. We are all PROUD of Dietra for her next job transition, as a youth counselor at Spruce St., a Secure Crisis Residential Center (SCRC) that picks up youth that are in crisis here in Seattle. We will miss Dietra’s warmth, light, love, professionalism and everything else that she has brought into our lives by just being herself. YOU ROCK OUR WORLD DIETRA !!!! Best wishes.

“Dietra thank you so much for everything you have done.” ~ Sam

“I will miss the fun times we had at Mockingbird! I appreciate how you’ve mentored me and helped me to discover myself.” ~ Raquel

“You brought so much to our team. We will miss you and wish you all the best at Spruce Street!” ~ Lauren

**What the Orion Center Has For You!**

**Jessica Garcia**

On my visits to the Orion center, the experiences were wonderful! The staff was welcoming, and wanted to offer me many services. I would suggest stopping by there if you are a youth that struggles in your present environment, or who just need a safe and fun environment to hang out for a while. The staff at Orion can help with many kinds of needs. They can make referrals to housing/shelter and healthcare. Kathleen works with youth who are HIV positive. The Orion center can also provide case management services which can help you find a job, get back in school and back on track overall. The staff there are really good at getting you connected. They have a school you can attend to get your GED or complete High-School.

The daily services offered are clothing, food and a safe place to hang-out. Lunch and dinner are Monday through Friday from 1-3:30 and 6-6:30. The drop in floor opens at 2:30. Breakfast is served Wednesdays at 9:00. You can wash your clothes on Wednesdays at 1:00pm and go to the food bank that they have to stock up for later. The Orion center activities include sailing trips, going to the YMCA to enjoy work-outs, a photography program with Youth in Focus and much more!

Please, if you ever find yourself in need of a safe place to go or would like good access to many services, I guarantee that you will be satisfied with a visit to The Orion Center. Think of it as a one-stop-shop. Please, it’s all free! If you need more information, contact them at 206-622-5555 or toll free 877-522-5551. They have MOVED and their new location is the building located on the corner of Denny and Stewart at 1828 Yale Ave. You can also visit www.youthcare.org and click on “services”.

**Three Steps to a Drama-Free Life**

**Renita Baskin**

Today’s youths’ problems are caused mainly by drama. No matter what state you are in or group of people you swing around, there will always be drama. That’s what teens like to think; especially when they know they’re the ones causing it. The truth is that you can eliminate all the drama out of your life. My three steps to do this are:

1. Test your friends to see if he/she talks about you behind your back. A good way to do this is to put them on three-way with one of your associates that you barely talk to and see if the will talk bad about you if the opportunity pops up; or will they be a true friend and stick up for you while you are not around. If you hear from somebody that you are being talked about by one of your peers, the best thing to do is to go to the main source in the situation (which would be that person). Once you have talked to them in an “adult manner” and find out that they weren’t talking about you, then the best thing to do is to not pay attention to the people that keep coming to you with the drama because those are the people that will do anything that they can to do see two people fight. If you discover or feel like the person really is talking about you, they’re just being childish and you should just not give them the time of day. This technique is really good because once they see that you’re the bigger person, that makes them feel really small.

2. The second step is to eliminate all the people that are in your life just to feed you more drama. A real friend will come to you when ever somebody is talking about you, but if they come to you you will be the “bigger person”, then they’re not a true friend. They are just using you for their own entertainment. Whenever you know that one of your friends are about to cause drama, make sure that you do whatever you can to stop them from doing things that you know they will regret. If you realize that you are constantly being a true friend and you’re not getting the same amount of respect and loyalty in return, then they probably aren’t a true friend.

3. The last part of the drama elimination process is to notice that when you stop talking to those certain drama related people, you sleep so much better and you will have more time to focus on the more important things in life: like your education and family problems (because we all know that those are always popping up). Sometimes we get so caught up in “he-said she-said” that we forget about the what really matters. This happens because we are too busy entertaining others. Trust me, I know. I use to spend my whole life trying to make school fun for others by picking on people and getting into fights just to be the center of attention. Then I noticed every time I played this role, my grades dropped. So remember that you can eliminate the drama with a little three step process.

I know sometimes life gets rough and you want to tell someone your problems and that’s not always the right thing to do because when you trust the wrong person, that can cause drama too. So, whenever you feel like you need to talk to someone and your friends are acting funny or you think that whatever you need to say is too personal to tell one of your friends or family, don’t forget there are places you can call.

- Crisis lines for teens by teens (206)461-3222
- Teen Crisis (800) 775-3102
- Troubled Teens (807)372-2920
- And for teen mothers (205)362-3332

Renita

**Lawsuits on MySpace**

**Surrri Evans**

The popular website MySpace, has been going on since 2003, with more than 80 million registered users the site has become a well known internet site that youth have open access to. Lately there has been a lot of reports about online predators harassing the young adults on the site.

The site prohibits children 13 and under to log on, and 18 or older aren’t allowed to request 14-15 year olds unless they know the persons full name e-mail address.

For the young adults on the site making a profile consist of their age gender and city, as for the older adults that log on their profile consist of the same but with more personal information. Making a profile doesn’t mean it has to be true, an adult can log on as a minor and request to chat with another minor and vice-versa.

The mother of a 14-year-old girl from Travis County, Texas filed a 30-million-dollar lawsuit against the site due to her daughter who claimed to have been sexually assaulted by a 19-year-old high school male. “In May, after a series of e-mails and phone calls, he picked her up at school, took her out to eat and to a movie, then drove her to an apartment complex parking lot in South Austin, where he sexually assaulted her, police said. He was arrested May 19.”

“The lawsuit claims that the Web site does not require users to verify their age and calls the security measures aimed at preventing strangers from contacting users younger than 16 utterly ineffective.” The I think that there should be more supervision by the parents, like curfews for the computer and teaching their kids what to do and what not to do on the computer and maybe that will help with the risk of young kids getting lured by the online predators. MySpace is not a true friend. They are just using you for their own entertainment. A real friend will come to you when ever somebody is talking about you, but if they come to you you will be the “bigger person”, then they’re not a true friend. They are just using you for their own entertainment. Whenever you know that one of your friends are about to cause drama, you can even use a fake name if it makes you feel more comfortable. To every problem there is a solution waiting to be found.

1. Get to know your child’s on-line usage.
2. Have rules and guidelines for the computer, and discuss them with your child and keep computer in general area.
3. If your child, or another adult, gets into a problem that occurs, don’t overreact. Take the time to work it out with your child.

(1) http://www.msnbc.msn.com

[Image 515x904 to 585x980]

Mockingbird Times, August 2006
**Rediscovering Myself and Family**

MALeka TAYLOR

Recently, I found myself stuck in one of life’s ruts, because of the chain of events that I allowed to happen in my life. I accept full responsibility for the things that I could control; the use of illegal substances and the break down of domestic abuse and I give God the things that were out of my hands; the side effects of the illegal substances and the fact that I ended up in a domestic violence situation.

The first link in my chain consisted of being disrespected, called all types of vulgar names, mentally/emotionally tortured and physically abused. Being called names, believe it or not, made me feel like I was in a normal and healthy relationship because of the female company that I kept and societal images I was given about how men treat women. I felt mentally/emotionally tortured because the times that I confided in the one I thought loved me about touchy issues (such as being sexually abused as a child) he would tell me that it wasn’t my fault. Then, as soon as he had me he would tell me that it was my fault and that I wasn’t “worth nothing”. The pain was so unbearable that I would verbally lash out and try to say equally bad things. In return, he would hit or choke me and when he felt like I got what I deserved, he would go through the whole “I’m sorry, I love you,” routine. Hurt, scared, and unsure, I accepted his apologies and tried to make myself believe that he really loved me.

The second link on my chain consisted of the use of alcohol. I would drink myself into a state of “freedom” (I thought) free from life itself. I felt no responsibility to myself or to anybody else. I was free to say and do what ever I wanted (I thought) free from life itself. I felt no responsibility to myself or to anybody else. I accept full responsibility for the things that I had built; it all disappeared before my eyes.

On Tuesday the 21th I ran into a man whom I struck a conversation with and out of the blue he said “ya know Jesus loves you,”. I instantly broke into tears. We continued our conversation, I called my mom and then I walked away. The very next day, the same man came and found me and told me that my family wanted me to come home. Once again, I broke into tears, because I was getting tired of the scandalous life; it just wasn’t fun any more. I had exactly $5.75 so I went to the store and bought a bag of Salt and Vinegar chips and a grape juice called my aunt and told her that I wanted to come home. She told me to meet here t the Greyhound station at 6:30 in the morning, so I did. When I got there I greeted my aunt but didn’t say too much because I was embarrassed and ashamed of things that indulged in. She understood and didn’t ask too many questions.

When I arrived at Portland Greyhound Station, my aunt greeted me with a loving and relieved smile. When I reached my moms house, I was hesitant to go inside, but I put my pride aside and opened the door I was welcomed with pure love. This “thank you God I’m rescued” feeling instantly filled the void my heart and my family and I picked up conversation right were we left off.

After being home for a couple days I found out that on Saturday, my family was going to come look for me because they knew something was wrong, I have never felt more important and loved in my life. Now that I’m here I’m going to build a new life and relationship with my family and make new friends, so far so good. The only thing I can rely on, when things go wrong, they’re my only escape they’re the only thing I can rely on, when things go wrong.

Life is just so hard at times and at those times you feel like “I don’t care.” I give up trying to get things, and things back that I have earned. I give up now because it feels like I have worked for nothing and the blame is all on me. Life feels like nothing but a game you win and sometimes you lose. I’ve lost a lot and I now have to gain all of my respect back; even though I have worked for it and I’m working for it again. Sometimes it feels like I’m just nothing. Like I have nothing and am nobody to anyone even my loved ones sometimes. I’m proud of my tears they are a part of me. They represent my fears, frustrations of wasted years. They come to me when I’m weak, my sadness is at it’s peak. During pain and my heartbreak, they’re my only escape The only thing I can rely on, when things go wrong Guaranteed to show up when I’m touched by writing or song An alternative to destruction, my tears are more productive They calm my nerves, better than drink or herb I only need a little push to send me to my edge I cry quite often in the closet, the shower or the bed More comforting than cookies or any kind of drug My tears are reliable to show up when the time comes Not like a man, tears are there when I need them

**Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit:**

One United Voice for Change

Current and former Foster Youth, aged 14 to 24 and their supporters will:

- Discuss the perceived stigma related to growing up in foster care
- Learn to use their voice effectively
- Establish local foster youth and alumni action groups to address issues important to them
- Identify pressing issues to discuss with state policy makers

October 7 & 8, applications due August 15, 2006 - Space is limited

Email fysummit@gmail.com for application

Sponsored by Casey Family Programs and WA Supreme Court Commission on Children in Foster Care

**Cool Sites to Visit This Summer**

www.liquidgeneration.com

LiquidGeneration offers a respite from your boring life by providing animated comedy spoofs, trivia, and quizzes.

www.snomes.com

This site separates the myths from the facts about many popular Urban Legends that are often found in forwarded emails

www.lotsofjokes.com

Every kind of joke you could think of resides in this funny website. Jokes, pictures, comics and more.

**Creative Corner**

Larishica’s Gentleness

LARISICA ASHER

My gentleness is very deep inside of me and only comes out when someone is hurting.

My gentleness shows to my baby brothers and sisters when they are feeling the pain of something that hurt them.

My gentleness is something that no one can take from me because of how deep it is in my soul.

My gentleness will never be taken or destroyed by anyone or anything because of the place it holds inside me.

I’m proud of my tears they are a part of me.

They represent my fears, frustrations of wasted years.

They come to me when I’m weak, my sadness is at it’s peak.

During pain and my heartbreak, they’re my only escape.

The only thing I can rely on, when things go wrong.

Guaranteed to show up when I’m touched by writing or song.

An alternative to destruction, my tears are more productive.

They calm my nerves, better than drink or herb.

I only need a little push to send me to my edge.

I cry quite often in the closet, the shower or the bed.

More comforting than cookies or any kind of drug.

My tears are reliable to show up when the time comes.

Not like a man, tears are there when I need them.

Life is Just So Hard at Times

TERESA ASHER

Life is just so hard at times and at those times you feel like “I don’t care.” I give up trying to get things, and things back that I have earned. I give up now because it feels like I have worked for nothing and the blame is all on me. Life feels like nothing but a game you win and sometimes you lose. I’ve lost a lot and I now have to gain all of my respect back; even though I have worked for it and I’m working for it again. Sometimes it feels like I’m just nothing. Like I have nothing and am nobody to anyone even my loved ones sometimes.

Like a lion’s hunger pain, I’m obliged to feed them.

I’m neither deranged nor ashamed that my tears descend my face.

I feel strong; they belong, like flowers in a vase.

They come slowly at first gently kissing my mouth.

Then faster and faster, leaving water on my blouse.

They’re sometimes salty, always pure.

Like a small ocean to the shore.

They carve pathways through my cheeks.

Seeming superficial they run deep.

Though you may not understand, why I love my tears so much.

Throughout my whole life, they’re the ONLY thing I trust.

If I didn’t have them I don’t know where I’d be.

I’m proud of my tears they are a part of me.

We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.

~ Franklin D. Roosevelt, 32nd president of US (1882 - 1945)